

Russian Political Interviews:
Face and Equivocation in a Cross-Cultural
Perspective

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Abstract

Significant research has been carried out on the structure of political interviews (Clayman 1988, 1992; Elliott and Bull, 1996; Bull and Elliott, 1998; Bull 2003) and on the face threats and the equivocation strategies used by politicians in response to face threats (Bull, 2003). However, the majority of these studies do not address multicultural contexts or interviews on the international level where competing norms may come into contact and additional threats to face may surface. Russian President Medvedev's interviews from his first year in office provide the opportunity to isolate a politician's individual communicative style based on responses to face threats, equivocation strategies, and the use of pragmatic particles. Response strategies are isolated and analyzed for their effectiveness and the degree to which they coincide with response strategies from a generalized Western context (Bull, 2003) and an oppositional minority position (Simon-Vandenberg, 2008).

Evidence is provided in this study for the necessity of expanding Bull's analytical frameworks to address the definition of questions (Sivenkova, 2008) and generic variations within different cultural contexts or in a cross-cultural environment for international political interviews. The possibility of pragmalinguistic failure as a contributing feature to misalignment as well as a Russian-specific use of pragmatic particles is discussed in conjunction with a summary of Medvedev's individual communicative style.

1.0 Introduction: Linguistic Analysis in Cross-cultural Research

Linguistic research can be a valuable tool to ascertain the validity of impressions garnered from a written or spoken text and to identify where cross-cultural miscommunication may occur. Research carried out by Bailey (2000) has successfully applied discourse analysis to investigate rumours of racial antagonism between Korean retailers and Afro-American customers in Los Angeles. Observed anecdotally in the media, Bailey provided concrete evidence of misunderstanding that arose through meaningful differences in the linguistic norms of these two ethnic groups, and which contributed to the impression of disrespect and intimidation between the two parties. In addition to substantiating the rumour and elucidating its cause, Bailey was able to determine that divergent communication styles contributed to both an “ongoing *source of tensions*” and “a *local enactment of pre-existing social conflicts* (2000: 87).” Bailey’s research is an example of how analysis of linguistic phenomena can shed light on the cause of seemingly inexplicable conflict.

A similar dilemma to the one outlined in Bailey’s research can be found in media reports and anecdotal evidence revealing a level of tension between Russia and the West, as expressed in political discourse. Mass media and political commentary indicate that Russia is seen as an aggressive political actor, an accusation that is perceived as unfair by Russian politicians, who claim they are “demonized” by the Western media (Speigel Online, 2007: 1; FT.com, 2008). In light of these allegations, the question of a particular Russian communicative style is topical, as is whether cultural miscommunication may be a factor underlying the contradictory points of view. Given what appears to be the mutually antagonistic positions held by the participants and a lack of clear evidence for the source of conflict, it would be useful to examine the linguistic texts of these interviews in search of misalignment (see Schegloff, 1984) between participants that may have been precipitated by differences in the response to face threats, the use of equivocation techniques, or pragmalinguistic failure in the use of pragmatic particles and modals. If not the source of the misalignment itself, such analysis could nonetheless indicate the situations in which conflict is prevalent and the ways in which a conflict encounter is enacted. If cultural differences in political communicative norms can be established, it is worth investigating how their interpretation may play a role in how a country is perceived on the level of international politics. To address this issue, the current paper will attempt to establish features in

Russian President Medvedev's interviews that may constitute an individual communicative style. The following research questions will be addressed: what equivocation strategies can be isolated that are unique to Medvedev, and how do they differ from Western strategies; do Russian pragmatic particles affect the interpretation of a text; and are Bull's (2003) typologies sufficient to address the genre of international political interviews.

2.0 Analytical Framework: Bull's (2003) Typologies

The framework for analysis constitutes Bull's typologies of face threats and equivocation, as described in Bull (2003). Used in conjunction with one another, these typologies are able to provide information about the risks politicians face in political discourse in regards to their personal reputation and that of their party or a significant other, and how they choose to respond. These risks are called *face-threats* in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, because they necessitate particular actions to preserve *face*, a term coined by Goffman (1955) in reference to "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (5)." Face can be lost, maintained or enhanced through the selection of response strategies, and Brown and Levinson's version of politeness theory attempts to systematically classify the stimuli and expected responses to those stimuli that categorize polite behavior, although ultimately this framework is too general for the purposes of this paper. Jucker (1986) has created an analytical framework specifically adapted to the type of face threats encountered in news interviews, however, it is Bull's typology of face threats that is most pertinent for the study of political interviews, both because it expands the focus of face threats from individual face to party face and because it allows for a more detailed analysis of question types (Bull, 2003: 133). Additional reference will be made to Bull's (2003) typology of questions and to *replies by default* as auxiliary theories related to the classification of face threats and equivocation.

Analysis of a politician's response to face threats over a series of interviews can reveal which are most problematic for the politician, as well as the personal style of the interviewer and interviewee. Although attuned to variations in individual style, Bull does not acknowledge cultural or generic variations. Bull's typologies were developed primarily on the basis of

interviews during the British General Elections, and Bull is clear to establish that his categorizations were created to describe his own data and should not be considered exhaustive by any means. The assumption is that the typologies will be elaborated and refined to better address the needs of a specific corpus. Sivenkova's (2008) discussion of British and Russian multiunit questions in parliamentary debates proves useful in questioning the limits of Bull's typology of questions, and her observations, discussed in the literature review, will be included into the analytical framework. Likewise, Simon-Vandenberg's (2008) study of interviews given by extremist politicians in Belgium sheds light on how Bull's typology of face threats may require expansion to address aspects of a different cultural context, as well as postulates a greater role for implicit replies in political discourse.

Relevant background studies detailing how pragmatic particles (Thomas, 1983) and modals (Anderson, 1998; Fetzer, 2008) may induce *pragmalinguistic failure* conclude the literature review, after which analysis of the data will be undertaken in four stages: (1) Bull's (2003) analysis of British interviews will serve as a basis for how the typologies are intended to be applied and as a standard within the Western political context, by examining the individual style and the audience's perception of Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Tony Blair; (2) the discourse strategies of Flemish extremists from Simon-Vandenberg (2008) will be examined in terms of implicit replies and "common sense"; (3) these observations will be applied to Medvedev's interviews to determine a communicative style based on his response to face threats, use of equivocation, and potential for pragmalinguistic failure; (4) and finally, the implications for the generic conventions of an international political interview will be discussed.

2.1 Bull's Typology of Face Threats

Several studies (Bull *et al.*, 1996; Bull & Wells, 2002b; Bull, 2003) address in detail the types of face threats inherent in political interview questions and how politicians use equivocation strategically to avoid replying to a face-threatening question. Bull's typology recognizes three primary categories representing the entity challenged by the threat: personal/political, party, and significant other (2003: 135-142). An additional 19 subordinate categories indicate the way in which the entity was threatened. The categories are based on data

from British news interviews from the 1992 General Elections (Bull *et al.*, 1996) and the 2001 General Elections (Bull & Wells, 2002b). A full description of Bull's typology of face threats is given in Appendix 1.

2.2 Bull's Typology of Equivocation

Bavelas *et al.*'s (1990) theory of equivocation postulates that in a situation where conflicting face threats arise, the addressee will equivocate to avoid potentially damaging statements. Situations that create conflicting face threats are called *avoidance-avoidance conflicts*. In situations that pose no face threat or no contradiction between face threats, called *no necessary threat* questions, the addressee was predicted to reply. Bull's typology of equivocation was developed as a result of the attempt to verify the theory of equivocation by examination of eight interviews with Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock in 1987 (Bull and Mayer, 1993; Bull, 2003) and seven interviews with John Major in 1990/1991 (Bull and Mayer, 1991; Bull, 2003). A distinction must be made between a *response*, which all politicians provide as long as they do not remain silent, and a *reply*, which supplies the missing variable requested by the interviewer's question (Bull, 2003: 105). Bull found that politicians did indeed react according to the theory of equivocation, and he categorized their responses according to twelve superordinate categories:

- ignore the question
- acknowledge the question
- question the question
- attack the question
- decline to answer
- make a political point
- give an incomplete reply
- repeat an answer
- state or imply the question has been answered
- apologize
- literalism.

Taking into account the subordinate categories for each type of equivocation, the typology yields a total of 35 divisions. A full description of Bull's typology of equivocation is given in Appendix 2.

It is also important to note that although excessive equivocation may in itself be face-threatening, equivocation is also a skill that can be exploited to a politician's benefit. In fact, an unskilled politician may incur damage to face if he responds to an avoidance-avoidance conflict. This type of response Bull terms an *avoidable face-damaging response* (Bull, 1998b).

2.3 Replies by Default

Most of Bull's framework is based on the explicit content of a text. The subject of implicit responses is broached by "default" confirmations and denials, that is, when "the very way in which a question is phrased projects a particular answer" (Bull, 2003: 143). However, the determining features of questions that allow a default answer are underspecified. Bull provides only the following guidelines: a confirmation by default occurs when a politician "fails to rebut a suggestion conveyed by the question;" the suggestion is also typically a negative characterization of the politician or party involved (Bull, 2003: 144). But if there are clear face threats in both directions, a non-reply has no default interpretation (Bull, 2003: 144).

2.4 Bull's Typology of Questions

Bull categorizes questions based on previous research carried out by Quirk *et al* (1985) and Jucker (1986). By combining insights from the two researchers, Bull ultimately recognizes six categories of questions divided into two headings: interrogative (*yes-no*, *interrogative word*, *disjunctive*) and non-interrogative (*declarative*, *moodless*, *indirect*) (2003: 104). Bull also allows for single-, double-, and multi-barreled questions, when "the interviewer is in effect asking" one, two, or more questions (2003: 111). It is clear from the examples provided by Bull that a double- or multi-barreled question can refer to either a series of propositions in one syntactic unit or to separate questions in succession. The classification includes partial replies. When only one of

several stated problems in a multi-barreled question is replied to, it is classified as a fractional reply:

- (1) Day: Many people reading that may say to themselves how so what on earth is the relevance of PR to better schools curbing inflation unemployment homelessness or any of our other problems?

(Bull, 2003: 111)

When only one of a series of questions in a double-barrelled question is answered, it is considered a half-answer:

- (2) Frost: But do you regret the leaking of that letter? Was that a black mark against the government?

(Bull, 2003: 110)

Declarative, moodless, and indirect questions are coded according to the question type they resemble in terms of the answer they require, which coincides with one of the other categories: *yes-no*, *interrogative-word*, or *disjunctive*. Moodless questions lack a transitive verb, and indirect questions are a type of declarative in which another individual's opinion is quoted (Bull, 2003: 103-4), also called *formulations* by Heritage (1985: 100). Declarative or indirect questions often occur as *subordinate* (Simon-Vandenberg. 2008: 348), or follow-up questions that the interviewer asks when the question has not been replied to the interviewer's satisfaction.

Bull's classification of questions is pertinent, firstly, because the face threats that challenge a politician are determined from the content of a question, and secondly, because the terminology is prevalent in analyses based on his framework which will be considered in the literature review.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 News Interviews: Generic Structure

Research by Greatbatch (1988), Heritage, Clayman, and Zimmerman (1988) and Clayman 1989 has established the standard generic conventions of the news interview, which exhibit some distinctions from other types of interview genres. News interviews have a strict format and pre-defined roles from which participants rarely deviate. Preallocation of turns is strictly adhered to, and there is an absence of the minimal responses at transition relevant places and back-channel responses that are common in conversational speech (1988: 412-3). In response to face threats, the interviewee can perform a number of speech acts in addition to providing information: politicians in particular tend to counter or resist in response to a question that challenges, probes, or casts doubt (Greatbatch, 1988: 405).

A transition from structural concerns to strategic intent is marked by the work of Jucker (1986) and Bull (2003). These observations precipitated the development of Bull's (2003) typology of equivocation, which attempts to provide a more detailed and structured format for describing the responses provided by interviewees. The stimulus for a particular type of equivocation is addressed by Bull's (2003) typology of face threats. In this manner, the study of equivocation and face threats adds complexity to the dynamics of news interviews, which previously were considered to be a rather limited interactional format.

Only a few studies have specifically addressed the role of the interviewer (Clayman 1988, 1992; Elliott and Bull, 1996; Bull and Elliott, 1998; Bull 2003), in terms of the interviewer's perceived neutrality and individual style, respectively. Clayman sees neutrality exercised in the pattern of turn-taking required by interviews. As an ideal, the interviewer is allowed to seek the opinions of others, but is not able to contribute his or her own opinion and must be careful not to comment excessively; this position is called a stance of *formal neutrality* (Clayman 1988). Ways in which the interviewer may carefully deviate from a position of formal neutrality have been discussed by Bull (2003) and will be addressed in the analysis of the Russian data where necessary. Additionally, Bull has shown that the individual style of interviewers can be measured by the types of face threats typically used in their questions and how effective they are in terms of combating equivocation to receive an answer to tough questions.

Despite these generic conventions, recent work undertaken on British and US political interviews suggests political interviews may include a high number of interruptions, warranting a study on interruption in interviews by Bull and Mayer (1988). Clayman (1989) has indicated that interruptions may also be a common feature in other types of news interviews as well. Thus, the generic conventions of news interviews continue to be refined and developed. The political interview, at least in Western contexts, have become more adversarial, combative (on the part of interviewers) and equivocal (on the part of interviewees) (Harris, 1986; Johansson, 2008), fuelled in part perhaps by the ongoing conversationalization of the media (Fairclough, 1995) and a blurring of the boundaries between the public and private sphere (Fetzer and Johansson 2007a).

It is unclear whether this shift in audience perceptions and expectations (Greatbatch, 1986) has been echoed in non-Western societies and the question of context remains important in establishing generic conventions. This paper argues that there is still room for greater variation within the genre structure – a point that has already been raised by Simon-Vandenberg (2008) in regards to implicit replies.

3.2 Institutional Commitment: Sivenkova 2008

Sivenkova makes the expression of *commitment* the study of her research on parliamentary debates. Defined by Sivenkova as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, cited in 2008: 363), *face* and *commitment* are related concepts in the sense that commitment is shown to the same domains that carry face value for the addressee and are vulnerable to face attacks. Sivenkova categorizes the relevant domains for parliamentary discourse as personal, in-group and institutional, the first two of which by her own admission correspond to Bull’s first two categories of face threats (2008: 363). But it is Sivenkova’s third domain that proves crucial for the study of international political interviews. By institutional, Sivenkova is referring to the professional responsibility of politicians in terms of their “institutional role as legislators” (2008: 364). The importance of protecting institutional face can be seen from the frequency with which it is invoked by politicians in parliamentary debate: structural elements expressing institutional commitment constituted 96% and 80% of the Russian

and British questions, respectively (2008: 364). The consistency of this data suggests that institutional commitment is arguably a cultural constant.

The concept of institutional commitment as a personal responsibility falls under Bull's personal/political category of face. However, on the international level, a politician, especially the premier of a country, is more often addressed as representative of his or her country than in terms of personal characteristics or party affiliation, and he or she often must counter face threats directed at the country from foreign interviewers. Here enters in the concept of a *country's* institutional face on the international level in terms of the extent to which a country fulfils the expectations and principles of the international community in regards to institutional expectations for cooperation, proper protocol, adherence to international law, and upholding the expected moral values.

Fairclough (1989) and van Dijk (1992) suggest that institutional norms can incite conflict in the sense that they are enforced from above in order to preserve power structures and the status quo. If there is an accepted way of doing things, there must be certain entities or populations that are the exception or that are in a position to lose because of the status quo. If Mansfield is correct that politics "is based on emotion, honour, and a desire to be treated equally" (2007: 41), then *institutional face* in terms of international political interviews may be crucial to understanding both the need to portray oneself and one's country as in conformance with international standards, or alternatively, to express dissent with these standards that may in fact contradict local norms, the preference of the electorate, or the interests of the country.

3.3 Multiunit Questions: Sivenkova 2008

Sivenkova's (2008) research is also relevant to Bull's definition of questions because she argues for a multiunit and multifunctional question turn, in which the units of an expanded question turn may play different roles to both boost and attenuate commitment. An MUQ is defined as "two or more structural components delivered together by the questioner" or "multiunit sequences aimed at eliciting some information ... or explanation from the respondent" (2008: 361). Possible components include:

- requests for information or explanation

- backgrounders
- metacomponents
- evaluative components
- etiquette-related components
- intensifiers
- requests for actions (2008: 362-3).

As we can see from Sivenkova's example, backgrounders or other non-interrogative units can be located before or after elements containing an explicit question:

MUQ:

- (3) I also applaud the work of the Secretary of State and the progress that has been made in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1). Will he tell us a bit more about what President Kabila said... about providing space for the Opposition (2)? We have met Opposition politicians here who have been concerned about that (3). What support can we continue to give via EUSEC... in particular in relation to the crucial issue of the security forces and their integration (4)?

(Hansard records, House of Commons, May 9, 2007, quoted in Sivenkova, 208: 361)

The particular structure of an MUQ depends on the requirements inherent in the activity at hand; Sivenkova quotes research in a variety of institutional settings which has proven MUQs to be multifunctional and strategically applied to represent multiple commitments within one question turn (Puchta & Potter 1999; Linell, Hovendahl & Lindholm 2003: 547, cited in Sivenkova, 2008: 360). The structural complexity of MUQs is seen as an attempt to juggle different identities and commitments (2008: 364). Given that commitment refers to the same domain as face threats, it is logical to assume that MUQs may also act as a means to balance multiple types of equivocation, or to leverage a reply with equivocation within the same response turn.

Bull (2003) considers only the final sentence or sequence of interrogative sentences containing an explicit question to constitute the missing variable to which a query refers, and all other propositions in the question turn are disregarded. Within a question turn, additional propositions generally constitute backgrounders and evaluative elements. If not considered part

of the question, this assumes backgrounders and evaluative elements must be accepted unconditionally and have no effect upon the way in which a politician answers a question. Whether Bull's definition is sufficient or whether it is necessary to adopt Sivenkova's concept of a multifunctional MUQ turn will be addressed in the analysis section.

3.4 Equivocation: Simon-Vandenberg 2008

The Flemish politicians' use of equivocation in Simon-Vandenberg 2008 warrants special attention because it exhibits how equivocation can take on the status of an implicit answer. Simon-Vandenberg found that the non-replies of the politicians was not random, but rather an implicit reply ran through the course of the interview, indicating an answer that the Flemish politicians could not say, or risk being labelled as racist and unfit for office. These equivocal responses used a variety of equivocation strategies which could not be considered confirmation or denial by default. Yet hints as to what this reply meant can be pieced together from the "juxtaposition of propositions and through contradictions (2008: 353)." As representatives of a disrespected minority, the politicians could not clearly state their opinions or risk condemnation. But their pattern of reply made their message clear in an off-record manner (see Brown and Levinson, 1987) which protected their face. The most useful insight to be gained from this observation is that the Flemish politicians may be showing a typical pattern of response when a politician must address both an institutional norm and their own electorate that holds different values and/or preferred responses. In remarking that the rightwing politician's equivocal responses are primarily attacks on the interviewer or on the question (2008: 355), Simon-Vandenberg also borders on the idea of more subtle, implicit face threats to the interviewer that can be couched in responses.

3.5 Pragmalinguistic Failure: Thomas (1983)

Thomas (1983) considers cross-cultural miscommunication at a high level of language competency to occur primarily due to *pragmalinguistic failure*. Failure ensues when there is a

direct translation of structures that may be syntactically or semantically equivalent in a speaker's native language and the target language, yet have a different usage in the target language. A competent translator may correct such errors, however, particularly troublesome can be the use of pragmatic particles and speech act strategies because these errors are not readily discernable, even to high level users of an L2 language – the error lies not in meaning, but in *pragmatic force*. *Pragmatic force* “mapped by the non-native speaker onto a given linguistic structure is systematically different from that normally assigned to it by a native speaker of the target language, or when a speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2 (Thomas, 1983:13-14).”

According to Thomas, some of the most common types of pragmalinguistic failure for Russian and English speakers are the use of a command where a question is preferred, the use of a negative question instead of a positive one, or the use of semantically-equivalent adverbs that may affect the interpretation of an utterance. Pragmatic particles of this type can play a role in the expression of commitment (Fetzer, 2008; Fraser, 1992), so a culturally inappropriate usage may be relevant to the perception of face threats and equivocation strategies. Thomas provides an example to illustrate how pragmalinguistic failure occurs with the adverbial *of course*:

(4) A: Is there a postal collection on Sunday?

B: Of course.

(5) A: Would you like something to drink?

B: Of course.

The first example is felicitous in English, but not the second, due to the fact that English often uses *of course* to indicate “fault or ignorance on the part of the address (Thomas, 1983).” An assumption of ignorance on the part of the speaker is much more plausible in the first question than in the second, which is typically used as a conventionalized polite request asking the addressee to specify what drink to bring the speaker. The addressee in this case commits the fault of literalism. Sociopragmatic errors of this type are common in Russian translation when *of course* is used to refer to something that an English speaker may not see as a logical assumption.

3.6 Modals and Commitment: Anderson (1999) and Fetzer (2008)

Anderson's (1998) study of modals examines whether after the fall of the Soviet Union the new wave of Russian politicians would use different communicative strategies when winning voter support was required to gain office. The premise of the experiment stems from the work of Sweetser (1990), who postulates a theory of *pragmatic ambiguity* for modals: modals are able "to vary the direction of audience attention (Anderson, 1998: 66)" by representing one of three meanings: content, epistemic and speech act. Anderson quotes Chafe and Pinker (Chafe 1994: 57-65; Pinker, 1994: 15-16) that utterances affect a hearer and speaker's behaviour by establishing the contents of a person's attention (1998: 64). Therefore, if speakers use only content meanings, there is no stress on individual opinion or the assumption that there exists a range of logical possibilities. If no alternatives are given, there is less chance the audience will take sides, or judge the speaker. Whereas dictators discourage the taking of sides, electoral politicians need to simulate participation and focus attention on themselves and on their relationship with the electorate, and the use of modals is one way in which politicians can vary "the focus of attention among the external world, the self, or the relationship of speaker to audience (Anderson, 1999: 64-5)."

Fetzer's (2008) work is primarily devoted to cognitive verbs and their role in expressing commitment in political discourse. However, her findings are relevant in that Fetzer, citing Biber *et al.* (1999), claims "modals, modal adverbs and stance markers play a similar role as cognitive verbs in representing the subjective domain, that is these structure features of a text invite the addressees to adopt the speaker's perspective and interpret a communicative contribution accordingly (2008: 384)." This opinion is backed up by Fraser in his work on pragmatic particles (1992, 2006). Therefore, they may act as *contextualization cues* (see Gumperz 1982), to trigger an intended interpretation of a proposition, just as Anderson suggests. The concept of *pragmatic ambiguity* coincides with Thomas' discussion of pragmalinguistic knowledge in the sense that "a lexical item retains a single semantic meaning across contexts but speakers use that meaning for different purposes in different contexts (Anderson, 1998: 67)." However, in order to achieve that purpose rather than pragmalinguistic failure, the participants must have a shared understanding of the use of modals in communicative strategy.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 British Data: Thatcher, Major and Blair

The individual communicative style of three British politicians has been established by Bull (2003) through the application of his typology of equivocation. The overall rate of reply is instructive in differentiating between communicative styles, although it was found to be inconclusive in terms of audience perception (2003). However, the choice of equivocation strategy both reveals individual communicative preferences and yields strong audience perceptions. An approximate understanding of the Western context for political interviews will be generalized from Bull's research and then compared with the Russian data.

4.1.1 Determining Individual Style

Bull classifies Margaret Thatcher's communicative style as aggressive because she often attacked the interviewer and reformulated questions and criticisms as accusations, in addition to personalizing issues and using formal titles (at times the incorrect one) and surnames (2003: 93-95). Bull interprets the use of formal address terms as creating the impression that an interviewer is being scolded and needs to "called to account" (2003: 95). Though the interpretation of surname use is likely culturally or contextually-specific and inappropriate to the very formal context of an international interview, other aspects Thatcher's style will be used to indicate what is considered an aggressive approach.

John Major's communicative style was characterized by Bull in the most negative light. Major uses the equivocation strategies of *literalism* and *declining to answer* by the subcategory *pleading ignorance*. Quite reasonably, Bull suggests "claiming to be uninformed is a particularly ineffective way of presenting non-replies when applied to subjects that everyone assumes he [Major] does know," because it either reveals naivety on the part of the politician or a lack of sincerity (2003: 127)." This injudicious use of equivocation strategies is termed "open evasiveness" by Bull, who claims it is at the very heart of Major's problem with audience perception: "Major was widely criticized throughout his premiership as weak, ineffectual and indecisive, and this strategy of 'wait and see' could be seen as making him look ineffectual and

unable to deal competently with the issues of the day (2003: 127).” Ultimately the strategy is also an ineffective one for avoiding a *face-damaging response* in British political interviews, because the interviewers in Bull’s data most often simply repeated the question or disagreed with Major’s purported lack of knowledge as an incredible claim (2003: 128).

Tony Blair, on the other hand, was exemplified as a skilful master of equivocation techniques. Bull quotes a piece in *The Guardian* by William Hague, Blair’s Conservative opponent, as evidence of public opinion towards Blair’s communicative style. Hague states that Blair’s skill in manipulating ambiguity is one of the politician’s “key strengths” that “both helped him into power and helped to keep him there” (2003: 198). This can be seen in the 1997 British General Elections, which provided Blair with a context full of conflicting face conflicts due to extreme changes in Labour Party policies between 1983-1997 (Bull, 2003 177).

Personally and on the level of party face, Blair was required to not present himself or the party as inconsistent, hypocritical, or “cynical, opportunist and unprincipled (Bull, 2003: 178).” As a key agent for change in the Party, he must provide a sound rationale for the change in policy, yet criticizing old Labour might alienate supporters within the party. Finally, he must make some acknowledgement of the past faults of the party to rationalize why the changes was made (Bull, 2003: 178). In five interviews, 71% of interview questions about the modernization created an *avoidance-avoidance conflict* to which Bull equivocated in all but one case (Bull, 2003: 189). Regardless, despite this high degree of equivocation, Blair was able to convey a positive impression by 1) emphasizing continuity in Labour policies as well as inevitability of political and social change, and 2) pointing out similar contradictions in the policies and actions of his opponents.

4.1.2 Audience Perception

The audience did not always immediately perceive the nuances discovered by Bull’s analysis. Thatcher, who was found to be aggressive, interrupted others and was interrupted herself to a very similar degree as other politician in the study. The difference lay in her vocal and frequent commentary on being interrupted, which persisted even when the interviewer had not done so (2003: 93). This combined with Thatcher’s habit of personalizing issues and taking

questions and criticisms as accusations, i.e. other explicit complaints, led to the perception that she was indeed badly treated by the interviewer (Bull, 2003: 96). Such observations suggest that explicit cues are important in forming audience perception, but despite first impressions, Thatcher was in fact very skilled at political discourse even to the degree that her interlocutors “felt obliged to justify and even apologize for their roles as interviewers (2003: 96).” More importantly, she was successful in stopping interviewers from pursuing a threatening line of questioning: following an attack, 83% of the time the interviewer asked a new question.

The low estimation of Major’s communicative style is also somewhat misleading. Although even Major’s biographer characterizes his speech as “flat and uninteresting” and claimed he “did not give one combative interview” (Anderson, 1991: 189, cited in Bull, 2003: 176), Major actually “produced the lowest proportion of *avoidable face-damaging responses*” of all the politicians Bull studied (2003: 176). Anderson goes on to fault Major for a number of additional stylistic faults in his communicative style (Anderson, 1991: 303-4), so it may be premature to ascribe the general impression a politician produces as wholly dependent on his or her manner of responding to face threats. Both Major and Thatcher produced impressions that had some negative content, while remaining very effective in their avoidance of face-damaging responses. A key difference is that Major, unlike Thatcher, was unsuccessful in avoiding subordinate questions, which might be a salient difference for the audience.

Blair’s communicative style was perceived positively despite the frequent equivocation he exhibited and the inherent risk in excessive equivocation. This is likely because his use of equivocation was not just a defensive strategy to avoid face-damaging remarks, but rather he used equivocation “to present the best face for himself and his party, in particular through promoting a highly inclusive social identity for New Labor (Bull, 2003: 198).” An example of Blair’s proactive use of equivocation can be seen in his answer to a complaint about the railways. The question places Blair in an *avoidance-avoidance conflict* due to publicity over major problems with the railways before the election, requiring comment, and also because Labour had been in power and was thus somewhat implicated in the failures, requiring equivocation (2003: 151).

- (6) Audience member: Why is it that er after four years of office the railways are in a worse state that we’ve ever seen in this country given that the policy is to encourage us not to use our cars?

Blair: Because the railways have been er because the railways have been under-invested for a very long period of time, and if we don't get the money into the railways, then we will carry on with a second or third class service.

Dimbleby: Are you ashamed of British railways?

Blair: I'm not proud of the state of British railways no I mean I think you'd be pretty odd if you said that...

(Bull, 2003: 151)

The first question provides *no necessary threat*, and Blair supplies the information requested. But the second question places Blair in an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*. His strategy is to reinterpret what the question refers to – the state of the railways, rather than the railways itself, which Bull finds to be a credible response (2003: 151). Many other examples of reinterpretation of a question exist in Blair's data, although the strategy does not appear in Bull's typology of equivocation. Example (6) also illustrates how the same topic can be phrased in different ways that align or misalign with the addressee. In the second question, the interviewer manufactures a face threat by personalizing and emotionalizing the issue.

4.1.3 British Communicative Norms

Therefore, based on the British data, we can generalize that in a Western political context direct and personal attacks on the interviewer are considered to be aggressive. Claiming to lack knowledge of political events or pretending to misunderstand the nuances of a question challenge a politician's credibility and institutional face. Equivocation should not be obvious to the audience, and arguably subordinate questions help to mark a politician as ineffective in his responses. Bull remarks that politicians are criticized specifically for being evasive (2003: 178), so any overt indication of equivocation may be in itself potentially face-threatening.

However, inclusivity, reference to progress, and reinterpretation of the question are interpreted favourably and careful criticism of opponents' inconsistencies and reference to a changed circumstance are tolerated. Blair is able to get the best currency out of his responses by reinterpretation of what is being queried, saving face and supplying a credible answer that is not obviously equivocal. To the same effect, additional strategies employed successfully by Blair for the purpose of reinterpreting a question include: supplying a third, unspecified option in disjunctives, strategically redefining a term, heavy qualification of a response, and types of literalism that reveal weaknesses in the interviewer's question rather than fault the interviewee (Bull: 2003: 183-5). Reinterpretation also allows a proactive response to other face threats that may be implicit.

On the other hand, it is not considered inappropriate for the interviewer to be quite direct and confrontational in posing questions, to the point of personalizing and emotionalizing political issues. The interviewer may appear to purposefully misalign with the politician in this way and appears to enjoy a powerful position in the interview. These results correspond to the characterization of the Western political interview genre in its contemporary form as combative. Finally, other stylistic elements in addition to equivocation may play as large or larger a role in determining audience perception.

4.2 Flemish Data: Two Flemish Extremists

The Flemish politicians studied by Simon-Vandenberghe must contend with a situation quite similar to Blair's dilemma after the Labour Party's reinvention: a recent reorganization of the Flemish Block forces the politicians to explain and justify this decision as well as placate members of their electorate who may have preferred the previous platform. The stakes are high—the party is fighting for survival, after recently having been ruled racist and in contempt of Belgian law (Simon-Vandenberghe, 2008: 346). In its most cynical reading, the politicians must essentially convince the audience of a lie – that their position is not the same as before, and that it is not what is generally considered racist: “they must strive to stay within the law, and they must come across as unwavering (Simon-Vandenberghe, 2008: 347).” The Flemish politicians are not just contending with an opposing political viewpoint, they must address and ultimately

conform, at least outwardly, to a national standard of equality; that is, an institutional norm not accepted by their electorate.

The purpose of comparing the Flemish data to Medvedev and the British politicians is not to suggest any of these politicians hold extreme beliefs. Bonnafous has found characteristics in the communicative style of the French extremist Le Pen that are replicated in the Flemish data, including: “comparisons between the nation and family, contrasting a bad image of the journalist/opponent with a positive one of oneself, attempt to confuse political ideals with family values, projecting the image of the opponent as irrational and in bad faith (Bonnafous, 1998: 13, cited in Simon-Vandenberg, 2008: 356). However, none of these characteristics are present in either the British or Medvedev’s interviews. Moreover, Medvedev and the British politicians exhibit a number of characteristics that are contradictory to the characterization of the Flemish politicians provided by Simon-Vandenberg. Therefore, any similarity between the data cannot be ascribed to its extremist nature. Instead, analysis will focus on how implicit replies are formulated, the implications of addressing multiple audiences, and the skilful manipulation of first impressions.

4.2.1 Characteristics of Minority Discourse

Simon-Vandenberg (2008) argues the communicative style of extremist politicians is distinct from that of mainstream politicians, primarily in the vicious and personal nature of attacks, their tendency to present the party as victims of unfair treatment (351), and a reluctance to provide concrete explanations of party positions (2008, 364). Although personal attacks acted as a successful strategy for Thatcher, the attacks of the Flemish politicians are extreme in extending to derogatory remarks aimed at the interviewer’s personal characteristics and family (2008: 353). There is the impression that a taboo has been broken, although this judgement of politeness may address an institutional norm not held by the politician’s electorate. Additionally, the attacks are unclear and disorganized, as is the logic of the argument, all of which weakens its overall effect, although it cannot be determined if the structure of the argument is characteristic of extremist discourse, or merely indicative of an unskilled politician.

Simon-Vandenberghe attributes the weak argument structure to a combination of non-replies in the responses which indicate “unambiguously that the speaker is balancing his responses between explicitness and implicitness (2008: 354).” This is illustrated in example (10).

(7) M: But you are coming out with a new statement of principles just now after the trial...uh...if you really mean it I mean why does it come precisely now and not sooner if it was...

MP: That statement of principles, yes.

M: ...an intrinsic process which was already taking place?

MP: The statement of principles *you shouldn't make more of that than what it actually is*, that is to say, uh.. because we got such a trial and there isn't a single party that has ever experienced that *I don't think that in democracies there has never been a party which got the knife to its throat that way we did* and then saw that the knife was stuck in, *we had to prepare ourselves* for the fact that the Belgium justice would declare us illegal, that has happened now and we have done it quietly and we have written our statement or principles. *If we hadn't been condemned last Tuesday we would have approved that statement of principle* if...if we had stayed Flemish Bloc.

(Simon-Vandenberghe, 2008: 354)

Certainly, example (7) shows no clear and explicit reply, and indicates how the Flemish “replies are always embedded in equivocal contexts and contain hedges (2008:350).” This is also seen in Blair's response to highly threatening *avoidance-avoidance* conflicts, but to far better effect. The difference lies in the fact that the Flemish arguments appear contradictory, random, or inconclusive. But it is likely that the weak arguments are not inherently *avoidable face-threatening responses*, but may be a strategy adopted by a minority in conflict with an institutional norm.

The Flemish politicians show an overall “negative directness and positive indirectness”: “Negative directness refers to the presence of strong language in the attacks on both the discourse of the debate and political opponents, while positive indirectness refers to the absence of clear statements of policy (2008: 351).” The suggestion is that these politicians are effective nonetheless, due to the *impression* of a strong argument, when in fact the opposite may be true

upon close analysis of the response. Simon Vandenberg makes a good point that: “Especially in media discourse, which is volatile, quickly processed, and forgotten, readers’ and viewers’ impressions may be distorted by rhetorical ploys, and forceful rebuttals may be confused with logic (2008: 351).” The presence of elements that vary audience impressions might explain the apparent contradictions between audience’s perception of British politicians’ communicative style and Bull’s close analysis, although what exactly is perceived as “strong” needs to be specified.

Finally, we find reference in the data to “common sense”, a strategy van Dijk (1992) claims is used as an attempt to garner support for one’s position in the absence of strong logical arguments. Although the feature appears several times in the Flemish data, it is wholly absent from the British, reiterating that an explicit use is considered inappropriate in the Western context.

4.3 Russian Data: Medvedev’s Political Interviews

Seven interviews from Medvedev’s first year in office will be analyzed. Five of them center around a dramatic development in international relations that marked a critical moment in Russia’s foreign policy: the recognition of Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent countries on August 26, 2008. The decision was contrary to the wishes of Western powers and appeared to contradict Russia’s policy in regards to the status of Kosovo. On the same day of the announcement, Medvedev gave three interviews to Western news corporations (BBC, CNN, FT1), as well as two to Russian journalists: Russia Today, a Russian English-language television station, and to representatives of Russia’s TV news channels. The interviews covered a contentious issue because the foreign governments represented had explicitly asked Medvedev not to recognize the independence of the regions. The declaration was widely considered to be an aggressive and strategic move on the part of the Russian Federation, and Russia was suspected of illegal military action on the territory of Georgia.

All five interviews were relatively short. The number of questions and word count for each of the confrontational interviews is given in Table 1.

Characteristics	Russia Today	TF1	CNN	Russian TV channels	BBC
Status	Government directed	Independent	Independent	Officially independent	Independent
News Audience	foreign	Foreign	Foreign	Russian	Foreign
Subject Matter	Contentious	Contentious	Contentious	Contentious	Contentious
Question Number	4	9	5	8	12
Word count	326	593	737	837	885

Table 1. Characterization of News Corporations in Confrontational Interviews

The length of the response did not necessarily correspond to the number of questions asked. All interviewers asked about the recognition of North Ossetia and Abkhazia, the recognition of Kosovo in February 2008, the current position of Russian troops in Georgia, and the possibility of a new Cold War. The text of the interviews were distributed or reported in some form both internationally and within Russia. Thus, the texts share a common genre, time, motivation, and an approximate length and thematic content.

However, essential differences exist between the interviews. Comparison of the foreign interviews allows Medvedev's responses to similar questions to be analyzed for consistency, or for variation in response type or interviewer styles. Replies to foreign nationals can be compared with replies given to Russian media. A final distinction lies between the two Russian interviews: Russia Today, unlike the TV channels, is a government-owned channel. The Russian TV channels report news for Russian citizens, whereas Russia Today reports a version of the news promoted by the Russian government to foreign nationals abroad.

The final two interviews act as a control and present data from an interview situation in which the subject matter is non-contentious. The same Russian TV channels conduct one interview, the other – a group of Western reporters from Reuters. The Russian interview covers the year in review, but is carried out like an informal chat between the participants and includes a number of questions of a personal nature. The interview with Reuters is informational in nature and took place in July immediately preceding the G8 Summit in Japan. Both of the interviews are significantly longer.

Official English translations of the interviews are publically available on the Kremlin website (www.kremlin.ru), and both the original Russian texts and the official translations served as the source of interview data.

Characteristics	Reuters	Russian TV Channels
Status	Independent	Officially independent
New Audience	Foreign	Russian
Subject Matter	Non-contentious	Non-contentious
Question Number	19	26
Word Count	3784	7148

Table 2. Characterization of News Corporations in Non-Confrontational Interviews

4.3.1 Question Composition: MUQs and Backgrounders

The first stage of analysis will address structural concerns: is Bull's typology of questions sufficient, or is an understanding of MUQs necessary to explain the Russian data. The overwhelming majority of questions are part of a lengthy question turn involving backgrounders and evaluative elements. When a question is couched in other structural elements, both background assumptions and evaluative elements function as an interpretation of facts that must be accepted upon answering the question because they form the context of the question, and only from this context can the question be understood. If the politician does not make explicit reference to them, he must implicitly accept them in answering the question. Given that they function as the interpretive context of the question, it is reasonable to include them as part of an MUQ turn. Once structural elements are included as functional units in MUQs, by analogy all elements of the response must be considered as functional units in the response. Support for this interpretation can be also found in the data. Medvedev typically answers the question first or proceeds immediately with an equivocation strategy. However, in some examples, the backgrounder is addressed first, indicating they must be of importance in setting the context in which the answer will be interpreted. Additionally, when Medvedev does not address a backgrounder, it may be reiterated as a subordinate question, indicating that an assumption existed that the backgrounder be addressed.

(8) Question: Mr President, two weeks ago, you agreed in talks with Mr Sarkozy that you would withdraw Russian forces from Georgia. But some of the Russian forces are still wandering the roads from the west to the east of the country, and the biggest port, the country's economic lungs, is still under your control. This does not respect the agreements signed. Why are you not respecting the agreement?

Medvedev: We are respecting the agreement in full and Russian forces are not wandering about anywhere but have withdrawn, as I said during my conversation with President Sarkozy. Russian forces are present only in the security zone, in accordance with the six principles. As for Georgian port of Poti, it is not under our control and we are not blockading it – this is all nonsense.

Question: But does the port not figure in the agreement?

A final argument comes from the use of declarative questions, which often appear the same as backgrounders and must be interpreted to be the primary question (Fetzer, 2007: 167) due to the absence of another proposition in interrogative syntax. If so, then both the concept of implicit questions arises, as does the idea that all backgrounders may carry propositions that must be confirmed or denied by the interviewee. In some cases they may be implicit questions, which require either a reply by default or an explicit response.

4.3.2 Face Categories in the Russian Data

A series of tables are presented indicating the distribution of face threats in the five interviews from the conflict situation. Medvedev's response in terms of reply/non-reply and equivocation is also provided. After the five tables are presented, there will be a discussion of the cumulative results of all five interviews. An additional table indicate the percentage of replies in relation to avoidance-avoidance conflicts.

When coding the face threats, I included several new threats to institutional face: cooperation, law, values and protocol. All of these are self explanatory except the final one, which refers to a code of politeness of conduct for premiers when they represent their country. I suggest that it is unacceptable for the premier of one country to speak to plainly about the decisions another country or premier ought to make. These institutional categories are included as subordinate categories under the categories of *self-justification* and *justification of policy*, and they are marked in italics for ease of reading. *Implicit threats* and *replies* are also marked in the table – these will be addressed in the next section on equivocation strategies.

Interview	Question and Face Threats		Equivocation Strategy
Russia Today	(1) Why did Russia decide to do so and how does this decision conform to the provisions of international law?	NNT	REPLY Political analysis Justification of policy
	Engaging in international cooperation (country) Adherence to international law (country)		
	(2) Tell us, is Russia is ready for the possibility that today's decision could lead to a long and tough confrontation with the leading world powers? And in general, are we are not worried by the prospects of a new Cold War?	A-A	REPLY Self-justification Lack of agency
	Creating a negative impression (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Supporting international values (country) Future difficulties (country)		
	(3) Is this true? Are there still Russian troops in Georgia?		
	Contradictions between policies (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Credibility (personal)	NNT	REPLY None
	(4) Don't you think that this situation has already become part of the domestic political struggle and will come to	A-A	NON-REPLY Political

	dominate that struggle in the United States?		analysis.
	Future difficulties (country) Following international protocol (personal)		

Table 3. Medvedev's Responses to Russia Today

Interview	Question and Face Threat		Equivocation Strategy
Russian TV Channels (<i>CI</i> , <i>NTV</i> , <i>Rossija</i>)	(1) Why was the decision to recognise these territories' independence taken when Georgia attacked Tskhinvali? Were there other options possible? (<i>CI</i>)	NNT	MULTIPLE REPLIES Political analysis Attack on opponent Justification of Policy
	Engaging in international cooperation (country)		
	(2) What kind of reaction can we expect from our closest neighbours, from the CIS countries, for example ? How important for Russia is it to have other countries follow our example and recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia? How much influence will this have in determining our next steps? (<i>NTV</i>)	A-A	MIXED REPLY Justification of Policy <i>International law</i> Self-justification <i>International values</i> Political analysis
	Engaging in international cooperation (country) Creating a negative impression (country) Future difficulties (country) Following international protocol (personal)		
	(3) What steps will Russia take now in these republics? What form will Russia's plans take? (<i>Rossija</i>)	A-A	MULTIPLE REPLIES Justification of policy <i>International law</i> Self-justification <i>International values</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country)		
	(4) How do you see the world's future, the future world order, and Russia's place in it? (<i>Rossija</i>)	A-A	PARTIAL REPLY Introduce policy Lack of agency <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Future difficulties (country)		

	(5) Dmitry Anatolyevich, are the priority regions the territories that border Russia? (CI)	A-A	REPLY, BUT
	Future difficulties (country)		
	(6) Do you think our laws give sufficient power to do this? Is it written in our laws? (NTV)	A-A	REPLY <i>Implicit threat</i>
	Credibility (personal) International/national law (personal)		
	(7) Perhaps a separate law is needed? (NTV)	A-A	MULTIPLE REPLIES Justification of policy <i>International/ national law</i>
	Credibility (personal) International/national law (personal)		
	(8) What about diplomatic and economic sanctions? (CI)	A-A	REPLY, BUT Justification of policy
	Engaging in international cooperation (country) Creating a negative impression (country) Future difficulties (country) Adherence to international law (country)		

Table 4. Medvedev's Responses to Russian TV Channels

Interview	Question and Face Threats		Equivocation Strategy
CNN	(1) Should this be interpreted as a direct challenge to the West?	NNT	REPLY Presenting policy Justifying policy Self-justification <i>International values</i>
	Engaging in international cooperation (country)		
	(2) Is not that a double-standard?	A-A	REPLY Political analysis Justification of policy <i>International law</i> Self-justification <i>International values</i>
	Contradictions between policies (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Credibility (personal)		

	(3) Would you send forces in to Georgia again, if necessary, or would you do so in other countries from the former Soviet Union?	A-A	MIXED REPLY Justification of policy <i>International law</i> Self-justification <i>International values</i> <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country)		
	(9) What steps would you like to see the next president of the US take in order to rebuild a cooperative partnership with Moscow?	A-A	MIXED REPLY Self-justification <i>International Cooperation</i> <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Following international protocol (personal) Engaging in international cooperation (country)		
	(10) So no new Cold war, but President Medvedev, do you believe that we are at the start of a prolonged and painful period of worsening relations in light of disagreements on a number of issues, including Georgia, missile defense and Iran ?	NNT	REPLY Lack of agency <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country)		

Table 5. Medvedev's Responses to CNN

Interview	Question and Face Threats		Equivocation Strategy
BBC	(1) Why did you decide to take a step leading to increased tension and escalation of the conflict?	NNT	REPLY Self-justification <i>International cooperation</i> <i>International values</i> Justification of Policy
	Engaging in international cooperation (country) Adherence to international law (country) Confirming a negative impression (country)		
	(2) Is this not hypocritical behaviour?		
	Contradictions between policies (country) Credibility (personal) Confirming a negative impression (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Supporting international values (country) Future difficulties (country)	A-A	REPLY Political analysis Justification of Policy <i>International law</i>

			<i>Common sense</i>
	(3) By taking this decision are you not renouncing the agreement that was reached, and does this mean that you think this agreement no longer needs to be implemented?	A-A	MIXED REPLY <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Contradictions between policies (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Credibility (personal)		
	(4) This creates the impression that rather than maintaining peace and carrying out peacekeeping functions, Russia is pursuing its own interests and is realising them through these acts.	A-A	MIXED REPLY Self-justification <i>International values</i> Justification of Policy <i>International Law</i> <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Credibility (personal)		
	(5) What are your troops doing in Poti? Are their actions an attempt to block the port, and if, for example, American ships want to enter the port to deliver humanitarian supplies, will Russia try to prevent this?	NNT	REPLY, BUT Lack of agency <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Confirming a negative impression (country)		
	(6) He says that your troops have moved far deeper into Georgian territory than was allowed under the terms of the agreements he reached with you.	A-A	NON-REPLY Decline to Answer <i>Inability to answer</i> <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Credibility (personal) Confirming a negative impression (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Adherence to international law (country)		
	(7) Is what is happening now a continuation of this dissatisfaction? Are your steps an attempt to send a signal to NATO and the United States not to meddle in affairs in your backyard?	NNT	REPLY, BUT <i>Implicit reply</i>
	Confirming a negative impression (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Breaking international protocol (personal)		
	(8) What impact will all of this have on Georgia and Ukraine – countries that want to join NATO? Judging by their reactions to what has taken place now their desire to join NATO has only grown stronger?	NNT	PARTIAL REPLY Political analysis.
	Engaging in international cooperation (country) Breaking international protocol (personal)		

	Confirming a negative impression (country)		
	(9) Does this mean that you are ready to take similar steps in other regions: in Ukraine, in the Baltic states, in Moldova?	A-A	REPLY Self-justification <i>International values</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country)		
	(10) So this is the question on many people's minds: who really runs the country – you or Prime Minister Putin?	NNT	NON-REPLY Literalism <i>Implicit attack</i>
	Failing to support significant other (personal) Credibility (personal) Confirming a negative impression (personal)		
	(11) What do you think of these fears, do you share this view and does it worry you? Does the thought of a possible renewal of the Cold War worry you?	A-A	REPLY Political analysis Self-justification <i>International Values</i>
	Future difficulties (personal) Adhering to international values (personal)		
	(12) But are you worried that a new Cold War could begin?	A-A	REPLY Lack of agency <i>Implicit threat</i>
	Future difficulties (personal) Adhering to international values (personal)		

Table 6. Medvedev's Responses to BBC

Interview	Question and Face Threat		Equivocation Strategy
TF1	(1) Why have you know decided to recognise the independence of these two Georgian regions – Abkhazia and South Ossetia?	NNT	REPLY Justification of Policy <i>International law</i> Self-justification <i>International cooperation</i>
	Creating a negative impression (country) Contradictions between policies (country)		
	(2) Do you think that Abkhazia is this boomerang he spoke of?	A-A	NON-REPLY Lack of agency <i>Implicit threat</i>
	Failing to support significant other (personal) Credibility (personal) Confirming a negative impression (personal)		
	(3) How do you see the future? Will it bring an end with European countries, with the whole world, and perhaps a new Cold War?	A-A	NON-REPLY Lack of agency <i>Implicit threat</i>
	Future difficulties (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country)		

(4) Does this signal a return of Russia's imperial ambitions, a restoration of empire?	A-A	REPLY, BUT Justification of policy Self-justification <i>International values</i> Attack opponent
Engaging in international cooperation (country) Creating a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Credibility (personal)		
(5) Why are you not respecting the agreement?	A-A	REPLY None
Contradictions between policies (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Confirming a negative impression (country) Adherence to international law (country) Credibility (personal)		
(6) But the port does not figure in the agreement?	A-A	REPLY Lack of agency <i>Implicit threat</i>
Credibility (personal) Adherence to international law (country) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Confirming a negative impression (country)		
(7) Do you think after this Georgia is entitled to limited sovereignty?	A-A	NON-REPLY <i>Implicit reply</i>
Future difficulties Adherence to international law (country) Breaking international protocol (personal)		
(8) What exactly do you mean by this?	NNT	NON-REPLY <i>Implicit threat</i>
Credibility (personal) Difficulty clarifying one's position (personal)		
(9) Don't you think that's a high price to pay?	A-A	REPLY Attack on opponent Political analysis
Credibility (personal) Engaging in international cooperation (country) Confirming a negative impression (country)		

Table 7. Medvedev's Responses to TF1

Reply rate	Russia Today		Russian TV Channels		CNN		BBC		TF1	
Avoidance Conflicts	2	50.00	7	87.50	3	60.00	7	58.330	7	77.78
Reply	3	75.00	1	12.50	3	60.00	5	41.67	4	44.44
Multiple Reply	0		3	37.50	0		0		0	
Mixed Reply	0		1	12.50	2	40.00	2	16.67	0	
Reply, But	0		2	25.00	0		2	16.67	1	11.11
Partial Reply	0		1	12.50	0		1	8.33	0	
Non-reply	1	25.00	0		0		2	16.67	4	44.44

Table 8. Rates of Avoidance-Avoidance Conflicts and Replies

Table 8 indicates that distributional analysis can be inconclusive in terms of face threats and *avoidance-avoidance conflicts*. Both the Russian TV channels and TF1 illustrated a very high number of conflicts, however, their reply rates differ considerable. What is more, many conflicts are posed in questions with an interrogative word, allowing Medvedev more freedom in his response. Therefore, the highest number of *avoidance-avoidance conflicts* does not necessarily coincide with the toughest interviews. As we can see from the table, Medvedev's responses cannot be categorized neatly into replies and non-replies due to the complexity of his equivocation strategies. Like Blair, Medvedev shifts the focus of the questions through reinterpretation. However, Medvedev very commonly begins his reply with an explicit answer, only after which he begins to equivocate, resulting in a type of "mixed reply" or "reply, but" strategy that is difficult to assess with Bull's typology. Secondly, Medvedev uses a strategy of multiple replies in the interview with Russian TV channels: he answers explicitly not once, but several times in the same way. Overall, Medvedev's reply rate including all reply types is 81.58%, which is much higher than Bull and Harris' rates of 46% and 40%, respectively (Bull, 2003). However, given the addition of different reply types, it is not clear if the data is comparable. If we consider only direct replies, Medvedev replies 42% of the time.

Ultimately, neither the number of face threats nor the presence of an avoidance-avoidance conflict could predict whether Medvedev would equivocate. This is likely because an

understanding of the entire picture is necessary, especially in terms of interviewer and interviewee alignment and the content of MUQs. For example, the interview given by Russian TV channels had only one question that did not create a conflict, however, the questions were all couched in a context that was less hostile than the foreign interviews. Foreign interviewers generally phrased questions in such a way as to frame the situation in a negative light. The Russian reporters, especially in the interview with Russia Today, showed a high degree of alignment with Medvedev by posing neutral questions, or even questions that were critical of the West, so that Medvedev did not have to risk his face when replying to them. The high number of conflicts in the interview with Russian TV channels was largely created by the face threat to future possibilities. Medvedev responded to these threats regardless, indicating that perhaps a national audience did not require the same kind of care when addressing plans for the future.

In terms of face threat categories, the majority affected the face of Russia as a country. Only a few referred to Medvedev individually, specifically in the interviews with TF1, BBC and the Russian TV channels. Given the large number of face threats that could be present in one question, there appears to be a hierarchy of face threats in terms of their relative seriousness, a consideration that could be individually or culturally determined. Face threats to credibility, confirming a negative impression and difficulty clarifying positions appear to be relatively weak face threats for Medvedev. Conversely, face threats of an international nature, especially in regards to international cooperation and law, are given priority in addition to face threats to future difficulties. The data clearly reflects Medvedev's desire to provide a tough stance on this international issue and to placate his constituents, however, he is not ready to appear like a rogue country that will disregard international conventions and rush into aggressive acts.

Bull admits that some face threats may be included as a default in the very act of answering, for example, *difficulty in producing/clarifying personal or party beliefs, etc.*, is excluded from Bull's analysis for this reason. I also suggest that the threat failing to present a positive image of self or the party is a default face threat in all questions. Institutional face on the level of country was especially important as Medvedev tried to preserve his international reputation, yet appear strong and authoritative for his constituents. This conflict in institutional and national preferences for replies may lie behind some of the examples that appear nonsensical. These replies have been labelled either *implicit threats* or *implicit replies*, and they

will be discussed in more detail in combination with some of Medvedev's unique equivocation strategies in the next section.

4.3.3 Medvedev's Equivocation Strategies

Based on the analysis of face threats and equivocation present above, equivocation strategies that are unique to Medvedev can be established, as well as those that share features of strategies found in the British and Flemish data.

4.3.3.1 Implicit Attacks

It is rare for Medvedev to engage in direct, personalized attacks on the interviewer, though he is very explicit in attacking opponents, such as Georgia or another country. Two exceptions are when Medvedev appears to strike back at a *personal* face threat by stressing his status and the relatively *powerless* position of the interview. The interviewer from the BBC is the most aggressive in pursuit of a clear reply, posing a series of subordinate questions and not allowing Medvedev to follow his typical strategy of producing an explicit answer, then reformulation or reinterpretation of the question. After a string of subordinate questions, the interviewer threatens Medvedev's personal face with a direct contradiction:

(9) Question: This does not fit with what President Sarkozy says. He says your troops have moved far deeper into Georgian territory than was allowed under the terms of the agreements he reached with you.

Medvedev: I don't know what my colleague Sarkozy is saying. On the telephone he says things I find more comprehensible. We have been speaking to each other quite regularly. The last time we spoke, he said it was very good that Russia has withdrawn all its troops.

BBC, kremlin.ru

Medvedev first begins with equivocation, pleading ignorance, but this is also face threatening because the claim is incredible. He exploits typical politeness strategies by use of off the record attacks, which are ambiguous and thus less threatening to Medvedev's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 228). Furthermore, Medvedev makes it clear he is privy to information the interviewer lacks due to the difference in their status. The interviewer cannot contend with this response and must progress to a new question. The question remains why an off-record attack of this type would seem so offense. Perhaps because it violates the Gricean Maxim of Quality (see Brown and Levinson, 1987), which is considered a basic premise of cooperative conversation. Another example of an unexpectedly abrupt reply that breaks Gricean norms and is most likely an implicit attack is given in examples (10) and (1). Medvedev responds with a blatant literalism.

- (10) Question: Dmitry Anatolyevich, you said that Russia would respond to any act of aggression committed against it. Do you think our laws give sufficient power to do this?
Is this written into our laws?

Medvedev: Of course.

Russian TV channels, kremlin.ru

- (11) Question: What exactly do you mean by this?
Medvedev: Exactly what I just said.

(TF1, kremlin.ru)

4.3.3.2 Lack of Agency

Although Medvedev speaks of his international partners constantly, his use of implicit threats seems to undermine his statements and make Medvedev's claim to international cooperation incredible. Medvedev uses a strategy of *declining to reply* through a *deferred reply* ('wait and see') combined with a lack of agency that is unusual and sometimes ominous for English speakers as it appears to wilfully suppress a natural informational element of the sentence structure (see Brown and Levinson, 1987). This 'wait and see' strategy combined with a lack of agency or an attempt to place agency on another party is used often by Medvedev in regards to the possibility of a new Cold War and to future actions involving the international community.

(12) Medvedev: We are not afraid of anything, including the prospects of a new Cold War. Of course we don't want that. In such a situation everything depends on the stance of our partners in the international community and our partners in the West. If they want to maintain good relations with Russia, they will understand the reason for our decision, and the situation will remain calm. If they chose a confrontational scenario, well, we have lived in different conditions, and we can manage it.

(Russia Today, kremlin.ru)

(13) Medvedev: I do not want any Cold War. It gave humanity nothing but problems. We will do everything we can to avoid this, but the ball is in Europe's court now, and if they want to worsen relations, they will of course achieve this. If they want to preserve our strategic relations – and I think this is absolutely in the interests of both Russia and Europe – then everything will be normal.

(TF1, kremlin.ru)

It is clear in this use of "we" that Medvedev is not referring to Russia, but rather making an ultimatum, which contradicts Medvedev's overt references to partners and the decision-making process.

4.3.3.3 Implicit Answers

Some of the examples of a lack of agency shown above also seem intended to provide an implicit answer. Here is another example that indicates through the nonsensical juxtapositioning of propositions, that this is most likely an implicit answer to the interviewer's question.

(14) Question: Six months ago, America, France, and a number of European countries decided to recognize Kosovo's independence. At that time, Vladimir Putin, your prime minister, said that this was boomerang that 'could come back to hit you on the head'. Do you think Abkhazia is this boomerang he spoke of?

Medvedev: Even if it were a boomerang it would be better that it didn't come back, but now that what has happened has happened, we are going to have to live with it.

(TF1, kremlin.ru)

All of these situations are quite serious in terms of the implications for Russia and the rest of the world, so it is reasonable to assume a clear answer from Russia's president on such important matters of policy. Medvedev is obvious about his use of evasion, which appears to be his intent. This can be seen in Medvedev's references to "common sense". Medvedev contests the validity of questions by suggesting questions are wrong, illogical, obvious, or that he has answered before. Many times he chides the interviewer: "I have already said", "I have talked about this more than once", and "of course (CNN, 2008)." Van Dijk has found that dominant groups, when they acknowledge criticism, tend to label the accusation as "unwarranted or even ridiculous" (1992: 546). As a member of the non-dominant group, Medvedev may be making use of this to challenge the interviewer and means of gain power (Fairclough, 1978: 77). Portraying himself in contradictory ways through blatant use of equivocation may be the result of frustration with the status quo and an institutional norm that he feels is manipulative. More work needs to be done on Russian political interviews to determine if there are pragmalinguistic factors in English that are negatively affecting Medvedev.

4.3.4 Pragmalinguistic Failure

In addition to face threats and equivocation, there are a number of other stylistic elements that may affect communicative style as well as have a dramatic effect on the audience's perception of a politician based on how salient the stylistic features are. Pragmatic particles and modals are two features of communicative style that may affect the pragmatic force of an utterance.

4.3.4.1 Pragmatic Particles

Pragmatic particles (see Fraser, 2006) considered in the research are *of course* and its synonyms *naturally* and *undoubtedly*. *Even* is also addressed because it can function similarly to boost or attenuate commitment to a statement, and because there is evidence it may also be involved in pragmalinguistic failure. In English there is a sense that *even* indicates a person has done more than their duty, though this interpretation is not obligatory in Russian. Because of the relative freedom of Russian word order, these elements may appear in the sentence initially, medially, although the sentence-final placement is the rarest for all three items.

Central to the analysis of the function of pragmatic particles in speech must be some understanding of how they function to either boost or attenuate commitment to the statement. Fetzer (2008) has linked the use of adverbs to cognitive verbs in the sense that they both vary the commitment expressed by the speaker. Fetzer (2008) states that if a cognitive verb is used in “the initial position of a turn with phonological prominence on the pronoun I/we in a dialogic context,” it boosts epistemic commitment, whereas usage in the medial or final position attenuates commitment (393).” Fraser (1992) confirms that pragmatic particles may signal commitment, so by analogy, the function of pragmatic particles may be hypothesized to act similarly in terms of the position of the particles in an utterance. The distribution and turn position of the pragmatic particles *of course*, *naturally*, *undoubtedly*, and *even* in Medvedev's speeches are given in Table 7. This analysis includes the two non-contentious interviews to test Thomas (1983)'s hypothesis that such particles can be wrongly interpreted as aggressive: if they appear in the non-contentious interviews, it is unlikely they are meant to function in that manner.

Pragmatic Particle	Russia Today		Russian TV Channels		CNN		BBC		TF1		Reuters		Russian TV Channels (Dec)	
TOTALS	1	%	5	%	7	%	4	%	5	%	26	%	55	%
of course <i>konechno</i>	1	100.00	3	60.00	3	42.86	1	25.00	3	60.00	9	34.62	28	50.90
Initial			1	20.00					1	20.00	1	3.85	3	5.45
Medial	1	100.00	2	40.00	3	42.86	1	25.00	2	40.00	8	30.77	25	45.45
Final														
Naturally <i>estestvenno</i>	0	0.00	1	20.00	2	28.57	2	50.00	1	20.00	7	26.92	11	20.00
Initial											1	3.85	2	3.64
Medial			1	20.00	2	28.57	2	50.00	1	20.00	6	23.08	9	16.36
Final														
undoubtedly <i>bezuslovno</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	3.85	3	5.45
Initial											1	3.85		
Medial													3	5.45
Final														
Even <i>dazhe</i>	0	0.00	1	20.00	2	28.57	1	25.00	1	20.00	9	34.62	13	23.64
Initial					1	14.29			1	20.00			3	5.45
Medial			1	20.00	1	14.29	1	25.00			9	34.62	10	18.18
Final														

Table 9. Distribution of Pragmatic Particles in Seven Interviews

In all categories, the medial position of pragmatic particles is the most common, not falling below 80% in six of seven interviews and averaging much higher. The exception is TF1, however, with only five instances of the pragmatic particles, this is unlikely to be significant. Pragmatic particle usage does not appear to differ substantially among the seven interviews. Evidence from the propositional content of the interviews also supports the interpretation that the pragmatic particles in the medial position attenuate propositional content. This can be seen in example (15) from the interview with Russia Today. My own translation is provided for this example due to a slight inaccuracy in the official translation. It is followed by a transcription.

(15) Nothing frightens us, including the perspective of a “cold war”. But we, of course, do not want it.

Nas nichego ne pugaet, v tom chisle i perspektiva “kholodnoj vojny”. No my, konechno, eje ne khotim.

(Russia Today, kremlin.ru)

The point of Medvedev's response is to retain a strong position, yet still make a concession to the idea that war is undesirable. In this situation, it is unlikely that Medvedev would use *of course* to strengthen the proposition. Turn-initial usages from the Russian data also support the interpretation that a turn-initial particle boosts propositional content. The only exception to this may be syntactic constraints when particles are placed in a subjectless construction. Example (16) from the interview with Reuters illustrates these findings.

(16) Undoubtedly, the biggest priority for surplus revenue earned from energy sales is investment in our own economy, in developing business in our country and supporting the social sphere and pension system.

Bezuslovno, chto vazhnejshim prioritetom investirovanija dopolnitel'nykh dokhodov, vznikajushchikh ot trgovli energonositeljami, javljajutsja pomeschenija etikh deneg v nashu ekonomiku, v razvitie biznesa vnutri strany, podderzhanie normal'nogo polozhenija del v sotsial'noj sfere, pensionnoj sisteme.

(Reuters, kremlin.ru)

Furthermore, the pragmatics particles are used consistently in this sense in the British data as well. Both instances of *of course* cited in Blair's speeches are turn-initial and refer to Blair's support for his own party, a proposition that must be quite strong. No medial or final usages are present in the data presented by Bull.

(17) Dimbleby: So was so was Britain right not to vote in a Labour Government in 1983 and in 1992 in your opinion?

Blair: No no of course not I have I've supported the Labour Party I stood as a Labour candidate.

(Bull, 2003: 186)

A few final points suggest that the use of *pragmatic particles* may even be typical of *non-confrontational* speech. Fetzer (2008) claims cognitive verbs also carry an “emotive” meaning that coincides with the epistemic meaning, similar to the use of modals (2008, 386). The observation may tentatively be extended to pragmatic particles given their similar use in this context. Kotthoff (2007) has identified the communicative style of Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union in informal speech to be as *pathetic*, especially in ritualized situations. Finally, Erman suggests that pragmatic particles may be used in an organizational function, as an aid in those places that are problematic for the speaker in terms of formulating the message or in conveying that message to the listener, or in expected difficulties for the listener to comprehend what he/she is trying to communicate (2001: 1339). Thus, rather than simply lacking a negative implication, as suggested by Thomas, instead these pragmatic particles may be used as a strategy with a particularly positive and communicative implications. To further address this hypothesis, the distribution of modals in their epistemic or speech act meaning will be examined.

4.3.4.2 Modals and Commitment

Although there are claims that Medvedev’s government is less democratic than previous regimes, the purpose of adopting Anderson’s study here is not to measure Medvedev against past Russian politicians, but rather against his own self; that is, to establish if Medvedev varies his usage of modals when speaking in different contexts to different audiences. Additionally, lacking previous research on modals and pragmalinguistic failure, Medvedev’s usage of the modal *should* will be compared with its usage by Western politicians to determine if modals constitute a domain that is sensitive to pragmalinguistic failure.

One disadvantage to Anderson and Sweetser’s approach is that the classification of the meaning of a modal as content, epistemic or speech act is not always straightforward and can involve some interpretation on the part of the researcher. The classifications in this paper are based as closely as possible on Anderson’s own definitions:

- 1) content meaning [is] about the situation facing both speaker and audience;
- 2) epistemic meaning [concerns] the reasonableness of the speaker’s inferences about the situation;

3) speech act meaning [defines] the relationship between the speaker and audience.

(Anderson, 1998: 67)

Modal Verb Form		Russia Today	Russian TV Channels	CNN	BBC	TF1	Reuters	Russian TV Channels (Dec)
TOTALS		0	7	2	2	6	48	78
CAN		0	0	1	0	0	5	4
indeclinable	<i>mozhno</i>			1			5	4
CAN		0	4	1	2	4	16	30
1 per sing	<i>mogu</i>							2
1 per sing, future	<i>cmogu</i>							1
3 per sing	<i>mozhet</i>		2				5	11
3 per sing, future	<i>cmozhet</i>						1	
1 per plu	<i>mozhem</i>		2			1	1	3
1 per plu, future	<i>cmozhet</i>			1		1	1	1
2 per plu	<i>mozhetete</i>						1	
3 per plu	<i>mogut</i>				1		4	3
past m	<i>mog</i>							2
past m, perfective	<i>smog</i>							1
past pl	<i>mogli</i>				1	2	2	2
past pl, perfective	<i>smogli</i>						1	4
SHOULD		0	3	0	0	2	27	44
neuter	<i>dolzhenno</i>		2				3	3
masculine	<i>dolzhen</i>		1				6	5
Feminine	<i>dolzhenno</i>					2	3	10
Plural	<i>dolzhenno</i>						15	26

Table 10. Modal Usage by Medvedev in Seven Interviews

Modal usage by the interviewer occurs very rarely. Given the assumption of interviewer neutrality, this finding supports the hypothesis that they are linked to epistemic and speech act meaning. All interviewer usages of modals had a content meaning. Medvedev's usages had frequent usage of epistemic meaning, and moderate speech act meanings, indicating that modals were indeed used to create a channel of communication with the audience. Medvedev did not display the heavy usage of content meaning that predominated in Anderson's analysis of Soviet speeches. Analysis of the type of meaning for *can* was not carried out in regards to US data, although a comparison of *should* was made. Only one instance of *should* in the US data carried an epistemic meaning. All other usages were purely content.

Comparisons with *should* were made primarily to determine if there was a distributional difference between the two languages. Table 10 indicates an unusually high distribution of the modal *should* in Russian, so given the high frequency of its use and the modal's common usage to indicate the course of action an individual would be best to take, it is another good candidate for pragmalinguistic failure. In order to better determine if there are cultural differences in modal use, Table 11 shows the number of modals present in four US interviews. The interviews do not attempt to be representative, but they all contain a high-ranking member of the US government involved in security, and all politicians are asked to reply to questions about the Iraq war. Table 12 indicates the frequency of modal use as a percentage.

Modal Verb Form	Bush Poland (591 words)	Wolfowitz BBC (685)	Powell F3 TV (1559)	Rumsfeld Washington Post (3570)
Totals	1	4	5	15
Can	1	3	5	14
Should	0	1	0	1

Table 11. Modal Use in Four US Interviews

Broadcasting Company	Can	Should
Poland (Bush)	0.169	0
BBC (Wolfowitz)	0.438	0.146
F3 TV (Powell)	0.321	0
Washington Post (Rumsfeld)	0.392	0.028
Russia Today	0	0
Russian TV Channels	0.358	0.478
CNN	0.136	0
BBC	0.226	0
TF1	0.674	0.337
Reuters	0.421	0.714
Russian TV Channels (Dec)	0.420	0.616

Table 12. Frequencies of Can and Should in All Interviews

The corpora used do not lend themselves well to statistical analysis, given that the small number of words in many of the interviews increases the likelihood of outliers which could skew the data. However, by calculating the average frequency (%) for *can* and *should*, it is apparent that there is a significant difference at least between the frequency of *should* in the two longer Russian interviews. I am reluctant to analyze the results further, as I believe an analysis of the number of questions in which a modal appears is more useful to our analysis of face threats. For example, the number of words deemed necessary to answer a question is based on the severity and number of face threats present in the questions, and in several of the questions, a modal is repeated several times in one question response. What is significant is that the particular face threat was answered with a modal, rather than if the modal was used several times in succession.

Regardless, the analysis of *can* and *should* even in this very small corpora of Russian and US interviews allows us to make a few conclusions. In the two interviews where *should* appears in the Russia data from a conflict situation, the frequency is still significantly higher than in the US data, and the frequency in the non-confrontational interviews is roughly one third to three quarters greater than in the non-confrontational data, and at least four times higher than in the US data. This evidence, though approximate, is enough to assert that the usage of *should* in Medvedev's communicative style differs substantially from Western (US) norms.

5.0 Conclusion: Medvedev's Communicative Style

For much of the interview, Medvedev's communicative style is effective, as he provides credible, well-formulated answers while protecting himself and his country from face attacks. Medvedev uses a number of the strategies that were employed by Blair and positively evaluated in a Western political context. For example, these include the reinterpretation of questions and the provision of a third option when faced with disjunctive questions. However, Medvedev remains inflexible when faced with tough interviewers, and often provides avoidable face-threatening responses after his strategy of reinterpretation is questioned repeatedly by an interviewer through the use of subordinate questions. Medvedev is also sensitive to face threats that attack his personal face. There is no indication that Medvedev is aggressive in a traditional sense, such as attacking the interviewer similar to the communicative style adopted by Thatcher. Although highly equivocal, Medvedev successfully avoids the appearance of uncertainty, and any recourse to *declining to answer* is likely an implicit attack on the interviewer. He is generally quite effective in stopping lines of questioning that become too direct. Medvedev also successfully incorporates strong elements into his speech to boost the appearance of reply rates, through the strategy of providing an immediate explicit reply, and then equivocating.

However, there is basis to assume that stylistic elements affect the interpretation of Medvedev's communicative style. Firstly, when a conflict ensues between the preferred replies of the international community and his electorate, Medvedev chooses to support the opinion electorate in a "hard" line, however, he expresses it in an indirect, off-record manner that can seem ominous. Medvedev's international interviews are riddled with implicit threats and replies that may be unfamiliar to those familiar with the Western context of interviews. Secondly, pragmalinguistic failure is likely to occur in regards to pragmatic particles and modals. Medvedev appears to use these elements to engage his interlocutor and smooth tension in the dialogue, however, these elements often are interpreted as aggressive in the Western context.

In regards to the limitations of Bull's typologies, Medvedev's interviews indicate that it is necessary to incorporate the concept of MUQs into the concept of face threats and equivocation. Secondly, the categories of face threats for international interviews must be expanded to account for the idea of multiple audiences and possible conflicts with the institutional norm. It would be instructive to look into the idea of a hierarchy face threats in which some have more import than

others. For example, Medvedev is particularly sensitive in a foreign context to face threats about future difficulties, credibility, and international face threats. However, some of these threats he answers freely in a different context with his own electorate.

The genre of the international news interview appears to be much more formal than interviews studied in previous literature; the role of the interviewer is quite limited, there is a clear power differential in favour of the politician, and no interruptions take place. The presence of avoidance-avoidance conflicts and high reply rates does not always isolate the “toughest” interview; rather, the context of the question and the composition of a multifunctional MUQ play a role in determining the overall threat of the question, as does the type of face threat incorporated. The alignment of the interviewer or the type or a conflict posed in interrogative questions may be less threatening than expected. Finally, the idea of multiple audiences has to be included into an understanding of the generic features of international political interviews.

Further research into implicit threats and attacks that occur in international interviews would be informative, as would research into not the reply rates elicited by face threats, but the type of equivocation in various contexts.

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Appendix 1. Bull's (2003) Typology of Equivocation

PERSONAL/POLITICAL FACE

- 1) Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about personal competence
- 2) Failing to present a positive image of self, if offered the opportunity
- 3) Losing credibility
- 4) Contradicting past statements
- 5) Personal difficulties in the future
- 6) Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about one's own public persona
- 7) Difficulty in producing/clarifying personal or party beliefs, statements, aims, principles, etc.

PARTY FACE

- 8) Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about the party of its policies, actions, statements, aims, principles, etc.
- 9) Failing to present a positive image of the party, if offered the opportunity
- 10) Future difficulties for party
- 11) Contradiction between the party's policies, statements, actions, aims, principles, etc.
- 12) Creating/confirming a negative assessment of the 'state of the nation' (for the party in power only)

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

(positively valued others: electorate, colleagues, and members of one's own party)

- 13) Not supporting the electorate
- 14) Not supporting a significant body of opinion in the electorate
- 15) Not supporting a colleague
- 16) Not supporting a sub-group of one's own party
- 17) Not supporting other positively valued people or institutions
- 18) Not supporting a friendly country
- 19) Supporting a negatively valued other

Appendix 2. Bull's (2003) Typology of Equivocation Typology

- 1) Ignores the question
- 2) Acknowledges the question without answering it
- 3) Questions the question:
 - a. Request for clarification
 - b. Reflects the question back to the interviewer
- 4) Attacks the question
 - a. Question fails to tackle the important issue.
 - b. Hypothetical or speculative
 - c. Based on false premise
 - d. Factually inaccurate
 - e. Misquotation
 - f. Quote out of context
 - g. Question is objectionable
 - h. Based on a false alternative
- 5) Attacks the interviewer
- 6) Declines to answer
 - a. On grounds of inability
 - b. Unwillingness to answer
 - c. Can't speak for someone else
 - d. Deferred – not possible to answer for the time being.
 - e. Pleads ignorance
- 7) Makes a political point
 - a. External attack
 - b. Presents policy
 - c. Justifies policy
 - d. Gives reassurance
 - e. Appeals to nationalism
 - f. Offers political analysis
 - g. Self-justification
 - h. Talks up one's side
- 8) Incomplete reply
 - a. Starts to answer but doesn't finish
 - b. Negative answer
 - c. Partial reply
 - d. Half answer
 - e. Fractional reply
- 9) Repeats an answer to a previous question
- 10) States or implies question already answered
- 11) Apologies
- 12) Literalism